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MEMBER PROFILE - MAY 2001

Jina-Michele M. Etienne

When introducing herself to clients, Jina Etienne likes to describe herself as an adviser and provider of solutions for small businesses. Indeed, Jina provides a wide range of accounting-related services, as well as a great deal more. With a Bachelor's degree in Accounting and a Master's in Taxation, Jina's background is corporate tax with strong expertise in accounting. In addition to doing primarily accounting and related tax work, she also does tax consulting, year-end planning, tax preparation and additional services for her business clients which include monthly write-up work, annual financial statements (compiled or reviewed), tax returns and individual returns for the owners of the business. However, Jina does not do audits.

Calling herself "more than just the accountant," Jina gives her clients more information than the typical accountant provides, creating solutions when clients turn to her with a variety of questions. "I have learned a great deal from clients," says Jina, "and what I learn from one client, I readily share with the next, who may have similar questions or problems." Jina's small business clients include a hair salon, a photographer, a restaurant in Georgetown Park Mall, a government contractor who sells office supplies, a computer consultant, a travel agent and many more.

Jina started her career in 1989 by working in the tax department of a "Big Five" accounting firm. Working with "mega-corporations," she saw great diversity and learned "how to think creatively." Taking what she had learned about working "for the big guys" and adapting it "for the little guys," Jina started her own business in 1993. She takes pride in "treating clients with respect, as I would want to be treated" and calls her clients "wonderful people." Jina especially enjoys the diversity of her clients' businesses and the freedom which her work affords her. "I'm never bored," says Jina. What distinguishes Jina from other accountants? "I think 'out of the box,' and clients like that creativity," she says. "I don't think like an accountant; I don't act like an accountant; I just have accounting skills."

This is Jina's first year as a WBO member. While she came to many meetings as a guest, she joined officially this year and took on the job of Membership Chair. Noting that being in the business world with men is different because women are different, Jina likes the seriousness of WBO women about their businesses. She believes that women can offer something to other women and enjoys knowing that WBO women have "been there and done that." She calls WBO "a unique place to meet other women who can truly appreciate what we're going through, not because we're in the same business but because we're in business."